



## State of Connecticut

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Testimony of Senator John McKinney, Minority Leader  
Environment Committee Public Hearing  
Friday, March 16, 2012  
10:00 AM in Room 2B of the LOB

### **HB 5409 AN ACT CONCERNING PET SHOPS AND CONSUMER REIMBURSEMENT FOR CERTAIN VETERINARY EXPENSES AND PROHIBITING PET SHOPS FROM SELLING DOGS AND CATS OBTAINED FROM SUBSTANDARD DOMESTIC ANIMAL MILLS.**

Connecticut families and individuals have a significant number of options when choosing their pets; pet stores, adoption centers, breeders, rescue groups, and others. This variety allows people to decide what type of pet they are looking for and gives them the option to adopt pets in need of a new home or start fresh with a young pet. Unfortunately, in some cases this has caused issues with the health of these pets, especially as breeders and pet stores continue to search for a means to stay competitively priced with an increasing number of pets in need of adoption or rescue.

There is a growing need to both ensure that families or individuals looking for a pet can be protected from two important issues: 1) that pets which they buy, adopt or rescue are certified and assured to be healthy and 2) that given the significant number of adoptable animals, those in stores are not raised in "puppy mills," characterized by substandard or restrictive environments. These two points are important to ensure healthy animals, as well as to prevent the unnecessary mistreatment of animals raised for pets just to reduce the bottom line for pet stores competing with adoptions.

House Bill 5409 is a significant step towards assisting families and individuals looking for a pet by protecting them from unknowingly purchasing an animal with health issues as well as preventing substandard breeding and raising of pets to be sold in pet stores.

Sections 1-3 establish a precedent for reimbursing pet owners who were forced to pay for medical services and medications after purchasing a pet which was deemed to then be suffering from a previously unstated or undocumented illness or congenital defect. While the pet owner would have to initially pay for such treatments, reimbursement up to \$500 can be received from the pet seller as long as the illness or congenital defect is documented and certified by a veterinarian. The key difference from past language is the addition of allowing the pet owner to retain ownership if they should wish to. This will help ensure that a pet can still have a loving family which will continue to care for it and should help prevent pets from being returned to stores or facilities and being inhumanely dealt with. This bill also establishes clear fines for violations, per animal, for any breeder or pet seller who violates the provisions of this bill; either not properly documenting the origin and history of animals, or not properly maintaining a sanitary and humane facility. This will go a long way towards increasing the proper breeding, care, and documentation of animals to be sold or kept as pets in Connecticut.

Section 4 makes it clear that substandard breeding facilities which restrict animal movement, access to clean water, access to open space, access to proper nutrition, and other concerns with “puppy mills” will not be tolerated in Connecticut. It goes further to ensure that pet stores must prevent selling animals which come from such “substandard domestic animal mill” facilities. With the significant number of animals in shelters, adoption centers, or rescue facilities there is no reason for substandard breeding facilities to be operated when a worthy animal can be easily adopted.

I urge you to support and pass HB 5409. With the large number of adoptable animals in Connecticut, there is a need to prevent inhumane breeding and selling practices. Furthermore, breeders and sellers owe it to pet owners to reimburse them if the sellers fail to inform owners of illnesses or congenital defects. This bill makes great progress for pet owners and adopters.